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The following Letter, written by an eminent lawyer of Connecticut, previous to the late election in that State, is now re-printed for wider circulation, from the belief that its argument may be of service in affecting public opinion in other States.

*To my friends of the legal profession throughout the State,
who adhere to the Democratic Party:*

THE intense interest which I feel in the result of our approaching election, surpassing that, I believe, which I have ever felt in any former election, makes me disquieted lest I may fail to do something which I shall hereafter feel that I might have done for my country in its peril. My health will not permit me to speak in public to any great extent, and if it did I could get few to hear me who are not already agreed with me in political sentiment; and what I might ordinarily write would probably reach but the same class. It has seemed to me that if I were to address you, you would, for friendship's sake, if for nothing else, read what I write—and perhaps some other of your political associates beyond the limits of our profession,—and I know you will accept what I say as honestly and seriously said. I have a very pleasant personal acquaintance with almost all the leading lawyers of the State, and I have known no difference in their friendly expressions between those of your party and those of my own. Many of you have invited me to the hospitality of your houses; not a few of you have honored me by partaking of mine. There is not one of you, I know, that will not listen kindly to what I have to say.

It matters not how this war began. You are probably of opinion that the opposition of northern anti-slavery men to the extension of Slavery, and to the execution of the fugitive-slave law,—an opposition regarded by you as unreasonable in extent and offensive in manner,—has goaded the South into rebellion. My most solemn conviction is, that the fact is not so. The leading men among the rebels have repeatedly declared that it was not so. My own settled belief is, that the course of compromises which the democratic party has favored for many years, is a more responsible author of our evils. Just as a compromise now would only be a preparation for a more dreadful war a few years hence, so every compromise has merely patched

together what was in its nature irreconcilable, and has postponed the outbreak for a little later day. Ten years ago I happened to be present at a political meeting in a neighboring city, and was called out for a speech. I had not spoken in a political meeting for several years, but told the audience that I would say a word to them. That word was this:—"The policy of slavery-restriction and no-compromise is the policy of *peace*; the policy of compromise is the policy of *war*. Every inch of ground yielded in a compromise becomes only new ground for the slave-power to stand on and demand new concessions; and, although compromise postpones an outbreak, yet the time will certainly come when concessions will be demanded which even the democratic party will not be willing to yield, and then will come war. The South, by that time, will be ready. They are not now. They will have become emboldened by constant successes, and too arrogant to yield then. They have not reached that point now. Our policy of firm resistance to every demand for new concessions, not required by the constitution, is the policy of peace. The democratic policy of concessions is the policy of war." Thus I thought ten years ago; thus I think now. Thus I feel sure history will unequivocally declare.

As I believed then that the policy of compromise was that of war, so I believe that the present policy of compromise and peace is the policy of ultimate war, far more dreadful in its waste of life, far more ruinous in its waste of treasure, than the sad war in which we are now engaged. I have not a doubt that true peace, true economy, true mercy, as well as true patriotism, demand of us the most energetic prosecution of the present war. If the present generation is to be impoverished and thrice decimated by it, it will be a grand investment for the good of our children and the world. If we leave the work undone, we throw away all the treasures of money and life already spent, and leave to our children, whom we ought to love more than ourselves, and to enrich whom we are willing to toil, a legacy, not merely of shame, but of the most impoverishing and bloody wars.

The causes of great events are almost always numerous, and many of the most potent lie out of the track of common observation. Some of the most potent causes of this war are probably, after all, latent or unrecognized. The progress of the world, the higher moral sentiments of the age as to human rights, advancing Christianity, the more distinct antagonism between the aristocracy of slavery and the democracy of free

society, the pressure of the moral sentiment of the Christian world upon the whole slaveholding system, have had a great deal to do with the production of the war. Christ, the Man of Peace, came, as he himself declared, not to bring peace into the world, but a sword; and wherever his gospel has gone (and it is to go everywhere; set it at defiance who will, it is to conquer the earth), it has produced conflicts, often most bloody, between the forces of evil and of good. The world has made its most positive advances in liberty only as it has stept from battle-field to battle-field. The bloody tracks which our revolutionary soldiers left on the frozen ground as they marched, are only symbolical of the blood-stains which have marked the footsteps of liberty ever since the world began. War is a dreadful thing. No one can have a stronger impression of its horrors than I think I have. Yet the grandeur of heroism the world has always acknowledged; and when that heroism is in a great cause, — when the soldier is wrought up to a forgetfulness of his own peril in the thought of the peril of liberty, and becomes a willing martyr for a great principle, we have one of the sublimest forms of true human greatness; and that which seems, at first sight, to be only a scourge to the world, becomes one of its grandest educators, and a means in God's hands of raising up the human race from the low level of mere material prosperity to the high plane of ennobling thoughts and great principles.

But whatever was the leading cause, or whatever the co-operating causes, the war is upon us, and the practical question is, what shall we do? What has been done, — what of folly, what of cowardice, what of wickedness, — is of little consequence. The question is, what shall we now do for our country?

It seems plain to me that we have but one thing to do, and that is *to fight*. The democratic resolutions say that it is "a monstrous fallacy that the Union can be restored by the armed hand." Here then, we are distinctly at issue. It is, of course, immediate peace that your party demand. But the Southern leaders say that they will not accept any terms of peace that do not recognize their independence; and there is not a sane man in the States, north or south, who believes that, upon an abandonment of hostilities, the Southern States would come back to the Union. It is then a monstrous fallacy that the Union can be restored by peace. On the other hand, is it so clearly a fallacy that it cannot be restored by war? You, many of you certainly, thought it could but a few months ago, and the indications of such a result are far more favorable now than

then. The rebels are at the point of famine, and will be reduced by mere force of hunger, if not by arms. What they now mainly rely on, as their own papers tell us, is the divisions in the north, — just the kind of demonstration which the democratic party in this State made in its late convention, and which will become substantial and potent in the success, if it occurs, of the party at the polls. General DIX, who, till he became an earnest friend of the war, had your confidence, has recently said that he feels sure of the success of our arms. So do many others, who were, a short time ago, great lights of your party, but who are now earnestly in favor of the war. So say and feel our soldiers, who were never more resolute and hopeful than to-day. They, instead of weakly leaning upon us, to help them bear up under the hardships and perils of their unaccustomed life, are pouring out upon us the surplus of their enthusiasm and energy, to help us at home. A sad and shameful return will it be on our part, if by encouraging the rebels, as the success of the democratic party would certainly do, we prolong the war through another weary year, and compel our brave sons and brothers to lay down another hundred thousand lives that might have been saved.

But the resolution means, perhaps, that the success of our arms would not *restore the Union*; that a conquest of the South would only leave a subjugated territory, not recovered States, in our hands. But why do you think this? Because they express so much hatred of us? But would not that stand equally in the way of a voluntary re-union? You have no good ground for your opinion. The Southerners are not, as were the Poles, a separate nationality. They are not, like the Poles, all of one mind on this subject. There are tens of thousands of Union men among them. There are also hundreds of thousands of poor men, ignorant and imposed upon, who are weary of the war, and would accept either result with no great shock to their sensibilities. Then there are the thousands of northern men who will find their way into those States; and most of all, there is the destruction of that system of slave labor which has been the one great cause of the outbreak, the maintenance of which was the object of the revolt, and which would have stood, if unimpaired, most seriously in the way of a re-union. When the rebellion fails it will become unpopular. Reactions are sure to follow such wild extravagances, and the leaders in the rebellion will lose all influence, while the now suppressed or banished Union men will lead the public sentiment and determine the public meas-

ures. I feel very sure of this. No one can know with any certainty that it will not be so; while it seems very certain that peace would fail utterly to secure the voluntary (and it could then only be voluntary) return of the revolted States. When we have suppressed the rebellion I should hope, by all means, that a magnanimous and conciliating policy would be adopted towards the recovered States. When they return to us I would be generous,—while they hold out I would be inexorable.

If then peace will not bring re-union, and war is to be abandoned, what have we but a division of the country,—a partition, voluntarily accepted, worse than that to which Poland was compelled to submit. For what would follow a disruption of the Union, and the establishment of an independent and foreign government in the Southern States? What could follow, but a permanent hostility,—the hate on our part that has grown out of the war (there was not a particle of it before), intensified by our failure, and by the great national humiliation, kept alive by constant acts of irritation, by the interference of rival interests, and by the necessity of defending an almost unlimited border line; and, on their part, by the constant escape of their slaves to our free territory, with no fugitive-slave law for their reclamation, and no disposition on our part to return them; the union sentiment, which, in case the war had been successful, would have gained ascendancy and have helped to bring back the old sentiments of common nationality and friendship, completely trodden out, and the leaders of the rebellion in permanent power and influence, and using that power and influence to intensify and render permanent the sentiments of hatred which now prevail. And what would be left of our country? The remaining States would no longer be the United States of America. That proud name would be gone forever. The right of secession would be established as a principle, and the remaining union would be only the weakest kind of a confederacy, ready to fall into fragments at the first tempest that should shake it—or rather already in fragments, held temporarily together by an imaginary bond, and the transient cohesion of some community of interests.

Thus inevitably the political ruin of the country, the destruction of a great part of its material prosperity, and the extinguishment of all its glory, will follow an abandonment of the war.

Can you look on this result with calmness? Can you go to the polls and vote for the supremacy of a party in the State that

declares itself in favor of a course that must inevitably produce this result?

Do you hope for a *reconstruction* of the Union after its confessed and formal dissolution? Are you bringing yourself to believe that after years of separation and sore experience of its evils, the two nations will, by a common impulse, come together again and try once more the union which they have discarded? Have you the least ground, the least substantial ground, for such a confidence? I can not have any. And if a new union should be formed it would not be the old union of our proud history, the old union of our cherished flag; it would be a new confederation, with a new name to win, and a new credit to acquire among the nations; and it would be a new confederation with the right of secession irremovably engrafted upon it. The old constitution of our fathers would be gone, and the new, by no language that the art of man could employ, could be made such an indissoluble covenant as the old. Born in weakness, it would never have respect abroad nor the force of supreme law at home.

And besides, since one of your watchwords has been "the constitution as it is," how can you consent to such a fundamental change of the constitution, or rather perhaps to a total abandonment of it? And again, since your great articles of impeachment against the administration are based upon its supposed departures from the constitution in the conduct of the war, an exigency for which the constitution has not, in terms, made adequate provision, how can you make it avowedly a part of your plan, to do the most unconstitutional act conceivable, in agreeing to a disruption of the Union?

I have felt, until recently, my greatest interest in this election, mainly because of its effect on the national policy, and the danger that would result to the country at large from the success of the democratic party. I am not without anxiety on that point now: but the indications are every where so decided that the war will not be abandoned, let what will be the exigency, that I have fallen back upon a ground of anxiety, which was, at first, far less prominent in my mind. The thought of the country had filled my mind to the exclusion almost of the thought of *my State*. That State I love only less than I love the whole country. And now the shame that may come upon her is constantly in my thoughts, and I long to protect her from it as I would protect the good name of my mother. We have had a grand history,—may God save us from sullyng it. This disloyal movement is a madness that has seized the people,

which will have but its short day, but will, nevertheless, if successful in gaining supremacy, enter into the history of our State as a disgraceful defeat in battle would have done. It will be more than a defeat in battle. It will be treason as well as cowardice. It will be short-lived. I have no fear of the contrary. When our soldiers return to vote again, they will stamp it out of sight in the mire. But without them it would pass away very soon, and a few years hence the very persons who are involved in it will look back with wonder on what they have done. Many a man who will vote for treason and cowardice at this election, will hereafter deny that he voted as he did; and those unfortunate men (some of them friends whom I would have gone far to serve, and whom I would now save from such a fate if I could) who have permitted themselves to stand before the people as candidates upon the disloyal platform of the party, will suffer a political damnation more complete than that to which Benedict Arnold was consigned. This is certainly so. This war, in history, will be the proudest and most glorious war that this nation has ever known,—surpassing, in all that inspires admiration, the great war of our revolution; and, long before the day when it shall have gone into the repose of history, it will have become the most popular war in which we have ever been engaged. Then, and very soon, will come shame to these abettors and leaders in disloyalty; then will come an indignant and irrevocable condemnation of them on the part of the people. This is just as sure to follow as the cause of right is sure to come to final success, and the decrees of God to stand.

The world always passes through its great times without being fully aware of them; indeed, on the part of the majority of those who live in the midst of such times, with scarcely a suspicion of them. We are proud, and shall always be, of our revolutionary period; but the present time is the heroic time of our history. Indeed, no conflict since the world began has been so grand as this, and history will mark this as the heroic age of the world. It may seem to some a petty contest for supremacy, between two jealous and angry sections. It is a part of that sublime conflict which has been going on through all the ages, between liberty and despotism, between the right and the wrong, between the powers of good and the powers of evil. This conflict is to go on till the right is everywhere established, and the wrong everywhere overthrown. Have you no faith in this ultimate triumph of good? I have the most abiding faith. A revelation from Heaven could not make me

surer. Indeed, we have that now. It matters little, perhaps, to the great cause itself, whether you and I are on its side; but it matters everything to us. I would humble myself in supplication at the feet of many a fellow-man, to bring him over to the loyal side in this great world-contest; but it would be more for his own sake than for the sake of the cause itself. That is sure to triumph, whether he works for it or against it,—but to him the loss is irreparable. The highest worldly successes cannot begin to compensate for the loss of the moral elevation, the growth in all that is great and noble, and the sublime satisfaction, that come from a conscious union with God in his great movements for the benefit of the world. Short-sighted men think the world is always to be controlled by evil men; but Christ is ultimately “to put all things under his feet,” and the world will not only accept him as its ruler, but call him by acclamation to his throne. Travellers have been profoundly impressed as they have looked, in the old world, upon the memorials of great nations that have filled a large space in the world’s history, and have passed away. I have looked upon some of these old ruins, but my imagination was never filled and inspired by them, as it is by the gathering materials, and the foundations which I see laid, for a new empire, grander than any that the world has ever seen. I would not lose the satisfaction, the elevating inspiration, of being consciously in harmony, both in earnest desire and in earnest effort, with this great movement, for all that I could win of wealth or station by stirring the bad passions or humoring the prejudices or conniving at the dishonesties of my fellow-men. May God grant that in my short day no man may have been made morally worse by my influence; but, if possible, may the world have been helped on by me a little towards its final good. To do Christian duty is the only mode of acquiring any substantial wealth; to neglect it is not only a sin against one’s moral nature, in the vital sustenance which he denies it, but a peril that is most fearful to contemplate.

My friends, every man of us has now a solemn and most responsible duty to perform. For the sake of our country, let our vote be such as to express the highest loyalty and patriotism; for the sake of our State, let it be such as to bear up her traditional glory; for the sake of our own immortal interests, let it be such that we shall not “be found fighting against God.”

With most friendly regard and esteem,

Yours,

HARTFORD, March 27, 1863.

JOHN HOOKER.

